How to Make a Movie

1. Come up with the basic idea for your story in a sentence or two.

2. Expand your ideas—four sections:

* Beginning/Introduction/Exposition: establish who your characters are, where the story takes place, and what conflict there is.
* Middle (most of the story is here) (this is the rising action, in English–class terms.)
* Climax (the most exciting point of the story)
* Denouement (what happens between the most exciting moment and the end…wrap up the storylines of each of your characters)

When this is done, cut the narrative into even smaller pieces; think about the introductions, development and transition of each of these four major parts. Keep working your story into smaller and smaller bits, until you have a good idea of what’s going to happen scene-by-scene.

Create your script.

3. Storyboard your film. Storyboarding means drawing out sketches of what you want your film shots to look like. It will help your director and cinematographer understand what you want.

4. Assemble your crew. You’ll want at least:

* Director: controls the creative aspects of the movie. Is a liaison between crew and cast. Decides what kind of shooting style, costume design, set design, and lighting will work. Decides if individual takes are good enough to use. Will also function as casting director (assigning parts to actors)
* Cinematographer or Director of Photography: In charge of making sure the lighting and filming (camera end) go smoothly, as well as helping the director decide how each shot should be framed, lit, and shot. In a small production, also is the lighting and camera person.
* Set Designer/Props Master Makes sure the sets “work” with the director’s creative vision. Props are the items that are used in the film, so the Props Master is in charge of finding, bringing, organizing, and returning all the chairs, books, water glasses, etc. that are used in the film.
* Costume Design/Hair and makeup/Script Supervisor: This person has three areas of responsibility:
  + Costuming—making sure that each character (and any background actors) are in appropriate costumes. Sometimes, a particular colour is associated with certain characters, or certain characters wear particular clothing items. On a big production, the costume designer would make these costumes. On your production, s/he will decide what is needed and keep a list of who is bringing what. S/he will clean any borrowed items that are worn and return them in good shape.
  + Hair and makeup—making sure that the actors are in the right hairstyles and makeup for each scene. This person might actually do everyone’s hair and makeup, or might just check to make sure hair and makeup are done by the individual actor.
  + Script Supervision—making sure the actors stay on script and that the film’s continuity is maintained (i.e. if Suzy’s hair is in a ponytail in the first part of a scene, it is also in a ponytail in the second part of a scene—which can be difficult to do if shooting that scene takes place over several days).

5. Scout Locations/Dress the Sets: If you are going to shoot on location (outdoors, away from school or home) find an area you want to use and make sure it’s available for filming. If you are going to build a set (“We can make my basement look like an arctic campsite…”), start putting them together and dressing (adding props to) them.

6. Cast Your Movie: Your group should be able to take on the roles in your movie, but if you want to get others to act in it, you may. Just be sure the director approves all casting!

7. Gather your equipment. At the very least, you’ll need a video camera. You will probably also need a tripod—to mount the camera for steady shots. You may want lighting equipment or sound equipment, if you can borrow it. (Note: if your dads have some worklights in the garage, they make great lights for filming!)

DON’T GO BUYING EQUIPMENT! This is an IT 9 project! You can borrow a camera and tripod from your teacher (the school has some available), but only during class time (you’ll need to come prepared to shoot right away). You will not get extra marks for having expensive lighting or audio equipment…so don’t bother. If someone you know has something you can borrow, fine.

8. Film the movie: It’s a good idea to shoot multiple takes from multiple angles. Refer to your “shots” handout for the effects certain shots can have on the viewer’s perception. At least, shoot a master for each scene and the mediums and close-ups for each part.

When your shots are all “in the can” (filmed), you will be turning your film over to another group. The other group will be responsible for all post-production editing, sound, and titling on your film.